

PERES PROJECTS



Nicholas GRAFIA. *Yung Clean (Getting the Job Done)*, 2019 Painting, Acrylics on Canvas, Chains, 128.27 x 125.10cm. Detail.

PRUNE: Cudelice Brazelton & Nicholas Grafia
Shoot the Lobster, New York September 14 - November 3, 2019
<https://www.shootthelobster.com/prune>

There is a question to be asked (but like, really): how do we deal with the surplus of produced images of black bodies and their innocent ap-position on the seemingly untouched walls of galleries – very clean, virginal, all soft –? In there, sanitized blackness keeps bouncing back and forth; it doesn't know where to go. On the way, it became whiter than whiteness; it is now stuck in the lightest of the dead-end, scrutinised and weakened (just a few symptoms of a condition called “overexposure”).

It is screaming but the more you spell “b_l_a_c_k”; the less meaningful it gets. This conundrum is surely one faced by many image-producers committed to questioning the current atmosphere of blackness: how to produce images, not only of but in blackness? Or even better: how to unproduce blackness through image / imaging / imagination? Douglass himself sanctified the “image – democracy – representation” trinity in his “Lecture on Pictures” (1861; then advertised as “Pictures and Progress”).

This should now be not only questioned but set ablaze. Against the gloss, let's embrace the state of “cheapness” of black-image (term employed by Douglass himself, actually!) and its “unbearable dissonance” (term used by Ottilie Assing, German radical feminist and abolitionist, one of Douglass' close correspondent, to describe him). Brazelton and Grafia are undoubtedly part of a generation of black practitioners on their way to disrupt what the establishment is expecting from artists of colour.

Brazelton's skin close-ups becoming moon (a strategy for cosmos-camouflage); and Grafia's ultrasaturated “scenes” (storyboards for cinematographic performances), are only a few of the gestures that challenge black-image making; and in doing so questioning production and circulation of the artwork itself.

One important thing to note is that the two artists are currently operating from Germany (Brazelton being based in Frankfurt, and Grafia in Dusseldorf). The acquaintance with another tradition of art-production; and a certain distance from the American-way-of- conceptualizing (notably blackness but not only), surely is (at least partly) responsible for such an unusual take on black-image-making (and distributing). Using Shoot the Lobster as a dead end not to escape but occupy, these two “entrepreneurs of the self” (cf. Achille Mbembé) welcome you to prune.